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DVDs this week

By Micheal Glitz

Blow (\$26.98; New Line)



Johnny Depp

Even in this unsuccessful crime melodrama, it's easy to tell that Johnny Depp is a marvelous actor. As a drug dealer who parlays his business acumen into a cocaine empire (before the inevitable fall), Depp is soulful and sweet without ever underplaying the nasty world his character chooses to play in. His increasing paranoia and pitiful end are nicely portrayed, even if director Ted Demme's story seems too familiar to truly engage. An added bonus is Paul Reubens as an associate of Depp's: at first his character seems like a silly gay stereotype, but Reubens gives him unexpected depths in a performance that deserves to be remembered come Oscar time (but almost certainly won't be).

61* (\$19.98; HBO)

Billy Crystal is a sentimental director. But baseball is a sentimental sport and brings out the best in him. (The nicest moment in *City Slickers* was Crystal's ode to Mickey Mantle, which is still replayed at Yankee Stadium at opportune moments.) The race between Mantle and Maris to top Babe Ruth's home run record is well-told, with Barry Pepper of *Saving Private Ryan* a particular standout. This is Crystal's best directing effort yet and can surely appeal to the non-fan. But if you have to ask why there's an asterisk in the title, you probably won't agree with those baseball fanatics who insist this is the best TV movie of the year, bar none.

The Tailor of Panama (\$24.95; Columbia TriStar)

This rather toothless adaptation of John Le Carre's lacerating novel may be remembered best as the reason why Pierce Brosnan's next movie as James Bond will be his last. True, Brosnan is ready to move on (even if his only notable non-Bond success was as a master thief in the very Bond-like caper *The Thomas Crown Affair*). But the Bond producers might have urged him into a few more turns as 007 if Brosnan hadn't tweaked them by playing this mocking spin on the British secret agent. He offers the only sparks here as a rutting spy who accepts the fanciful tales of a tailor (a solid Geoffrey Rush) and presents them to his boss as the stirrings of a revolution. Director John Boorman has done much better work.



Pierce Brosnan

Nelly and Monsieur Arnaud (\$29.95; New Yorker)

I wonder if Emmanuelle Beart can sing? In every other respect, she is the clear heir to Catherine Deneuve - an impossibly beautiful woman who is also an exceptional actress. She first came to attention in the States via Roger Ebert, the rare movie critic who - along with David Denby - is willing to openly discuss the performers that he finds sexually arousing. His recommendation in 1987 to see the laughably bad comedy *Date With an Angel* simply because Beart is so stunningly gorgeous spurred one of the funniest exchanges on his show with Gene Siskel. She's proven he has impeccable taste by going from strength to strength in dramas like *Manon of the Spring* and *Un Coeur En Hiver* to this one about a (beautiful) young woman who strikes up a platonic romance with a much older man. They only realize how much the relationship means after it ends. Subtle, intelligent and quite moving, it's the latest tribute to how fine a performer Beart is.

The Avengers: The Complete Emma Peel Mega-Set (\$199.95; A&E)

The collected plays of Shakespeare. Frank Sinatra's series of Capitol concept albums. The novels of Dickens. To these defining, must-have works of art, A&E has added the saucy, leather-clad Mrs. Emma Peel. Though other partners of Patrick Macnee's John Steel have their advocates, any sensible person would agree the incomparable Diana Rigg starred in the best episodes of this quirky British spy series. Here they are: 51 droll adventures from 1965 to 1967 featured on 16 DVDs encased in a doorstop of a boxed set. Too much of a good thing? Perhaps. But like one too many martinis, there are worse ways to suffer.

— Michael Glitz